

# **THE PRESENT**

POEMS

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## THE PRESENT

A low wall there  
made of stones  
the men have gathered  
unnoticed a long time

Socrates speaking  
and the Terror screaming  
guns of the Marne  
burning oil of Midway

These voices call us  
address us again  
and yet once again  
silent and strong

Sounds of the rain  
and the night outside  
create a halo around  
the lamplight's brow

Who is the victor  
who the vanquished  
in this one moment  
here and now?

Applause perhaps  
or a strange hissing  
rumor denunciation  
in the low sound of rain

Streams and counter-  
streams through  
night's stars themselves  
flowing so rapidly

Time currents surge  
forward surge backward  
both at once and  
the horizon closes

Now meet the stranger  
in the corner  
of the public square  
stepping from the crowd

He came into  
the empty square  
from the four routes  
of the night

Someone was waiting  
they stepped from  
their doubled shadow  
dripped from the street's leaf

Slid down the stem  
of an alleyway -- was  
it a woman was it a man  
running toward the day?

Leaf heart meaning  
fallen from the  
infinite branch of words  
into my eye's palm

I step through the door  
the words indicate  
but cannot open  
branch waves surging

Branches of surf  
and the froth – weightless –  
of a bird's nest  
like a crown held up

The cattails' lances  
in the staggering red sun  
are rifles set in rows  
are soldiers massing

The silence on the  
road side as the  
purple clouds are  
steeped further whispers

Shadow legs  
blinking toward you  
like scissors flashing  
like knives

A hand is raised  
in the morning lane  
holding a coin  
that holds a face

A face is raised  
in the morning sky  
holding an eye  
that holds a sun

A sun is raised  
in the morning night  
holding a light  
that holds a hand

Your problems  
can be solved  
by watching  
listening

Those ill  
can be helped  
by application  
of thought

The world  
is changed  
by thought  
by concepts

You who come after  
me out of the  
coat pocket of time  
and sun-gated streets

You who come after  
my steps in  
the moon-fountained  
shadow leaf parks

Holding your silver rings  
inside your own  
closed mouths full of  
futures and pasts

Decision within each  
syllable of breath  
the text of history  
arches and burns

The wick of a glance  
is touched to the pool  
of oil so that a million  
olive branches char

These darkened veins  
lead to the heart  
of the silent world  
tracked in a hand's page



World arteries  
harden the heart  
straining tightening  
in blinded pain

This gasp in the mouth  
of historical time  
billions of blood cells  
standing still

Sunset ice water  
puddle of darkness  
and a forehead  
on wet asphalt

If I speak to you  
who then  
can know you,  
does anyone?

If you speak to me  
who then  
can know me,  
do you?

If another is  
here with us  
who then, what  
then are we?

Do not look for me  
in the hail storm  
in the cornflower blue  
the bronze sunrise

I am silent by  
the cellar window  
turned to the ground  
and in hiding

There are camps  
of us here there  
flashing shrapnel-like  
signals through the dawn

Hail storm of earth  
above the hawthorn  
streetlight ink-colored  
smoke of clouds

Sunset menstruation  
between the buildings'  
wide open cleft  
of historical spasms

Earth screaming  
in orgasms of  
terror violence  
thought's blood stains

Aluminum pole light  
pulse of night lot  
heart squeeze shout  
dog pack gather

Shadow legs rule  
granule paper of  
goose bumped asphalt  
beneath rat lab shine

Glans penis past  
zipper vagina  
fountains bright urine  
on an unconscious head

World swarming of  
roaches through  
the cracks of history  
in the darkness of time

World confusion of  
voices shouting whispering  
keeping silent in their  
secret knowledge

Conspiracy ringing loud  
in these falling coins  
the dense traffic  
these blood red lights

Air filled with  
Gun powder smoke  
And the rain follows  
plumb lines down

The woods opposite  
are thinking of us,  
holding those to kill us who  
bleed from it in streams

The sponge of the future  
is held in the present's  
grip so heavy and  
full of blood

Faces are framed in  
the television screen  
the computer screen  
grave and luminous

Mouths move speaking  
meaningless chopped  
words some still  
bleeding all dead

Eyes looking out  
from the light quite  
inviolable and watching  
from that distance

Light spurts into  
the earth's mouth,  
the horizon is  
drawing up the sun

Rush of morning air  
through the dark grass,  
and the field's hair  
stands on end

Hurry hurry  
yes the bright veins  
are saying quickly  
through pouring sands

Rustling of corn leaves  
silk from the waterfall  
of bright grass through  
the sun's pupil

Green kiwi slices  
loom up in  
the dark of  
sun memories

The field flows  
with water the sky  
streams with grass and  
it burns the last hay

Burning blue sky  
I would like to  
step into it  
walking far away

Go away away  
into the bright  
blue day somewhere  
sometime somewhere

Dust on the blinds  
glitters to the day  
above the trees  
the clouds flow through and on

Three hundred cities  
burning in France  
France is France again  
three hundred cities

Flames cut through  
the reams of paper  
flames cut through  
the civic files

Flames cut through  
the anonymous programs  
the official forms  
the dead officials

This is London  
the BBC the voice  
of England others  
gathering beneath

Beneath the resonant  
and official voices  
are many yet unknown  
unseen yet speaking

Beneath the resonant  
and official voices  
are unknown voices  
not for long unknown

Those met on the street --  
who knows the thing  
that is the important thing  
the mark set for all?

Rumors spill in gray light  
from picture screens  
speak from radios  
glow on terminals

Who knows the thing  
that is happening  
that is real not an illusion  
affecting finally all?

Events build forward  
a disease with no symptoms  
silence is epidemic  
unknown unspoken screams

Hear it in the shopping mall  
hear it in the parking garage  
in the supermarket's clang  
the waiting room's pages

Who knows the thing  
that is building forward  
the people crouch like rabbits  
but there are some who know

The circumcised boy  
screams the delivery room  
his bowels evacuate  
he's strapped spread eagle

The homeless man  
lies under cardboard  
beside the steal dumpster  
locked shut against misuse

The cop car's probe  
splits the vaginal  
alleyway right through  
searching its tense walls



American solitaire  
adrift on the raft  
of a city through  
the confusing night

Cold streams of terror,  
paranoid bright neon --  
violent elated moods  
cooled out in a cell

O grim companions  
where are you going  
as one put drunk into the mail boat  
where will you wake up?

Each word is felt  
in the vibrations  
of its web so  
quick and tense

The scripture pared down  
one notch at a time --  
gradient comprehension,  
and so it is mine

I offer it to the others  
where they may find it  
I hope that they find it  
at some point in time

Delusional Americans  
with your  
nasal voices  
and bad food

You have made  
a special virtue out  
of trivializing yourselves,  
and now what?

Those who so  
lack self-respect  
cannot respect  
anyone, anything

Delusional Americans  
with your silly  
voices every statement  
is a question

Everything is  
so cute so  
very cute Walt Disney  
pours paint buckets

Of blood human  
animal the  
bloody gloves  
of the circumciser

I walk among  
the others but  
I do not want  
to be with them

I know them  
but they though  
quite real do  
not know me

I know them  
only too well  
by their voices  
by their faces

Raucous woman  
with a stupid  
crass voice I  
piss in your mouth

Critical woman with  
three or four  
stupid cliché ideas  
so loud

Ignorant woman  
sitting in front  
of the television  
with a magazine

I attempt to  
summon the  
words that will  
say it, truth

Where there is  
a hand an eye  
has been placed  
inside of it

Where there is  
a mouth there  
is an ear  
of listening

Delusional Americans  
your country is  
a pile of shit  
is a vast pig sty

The stench of  
its moral  
degradation reaches  
to the clouds

Blighted land,  
the corrosion  
of sheer ignorance  
eats your aluminum

Delusional Americans --  
your promiscuous  
girls with their nasal voices  
everything's a question

Your obese ignorant  
children your  
fascist ministers  
and rapacious MDs

I would not  
wipe my ass  
with your culture  
now, it is shit

Delusional Americans  
you want to  
destroy the countries  
to the south

You want to  
destroy the countries  
to the west  
and to the east

Your bankers  
spit in your face  
you lick it up  
you swallow it

Delusional Americans  
scum and rabble  
sweepings from  
the streets of Europe

Your supposed equality  
is fictitious it is  
really quite a joke  
the classless society

Your petit-bourgeois  
fantasies of god  
country and so forth  
have come to this

Obamma says  
to the gulf coast --  
eat shit and die  
red state scum

Enjoy your  
benzene  
courtesy of  
Cheney

The ship has  
struck the ice berg,  
but the passengers  
are still dancing

Blighted land  
your empty heroes  
your mindless writers  
ignorant teachers

The scum and rabble  
of your board rooms  
your penthouse  
riff raff

Your deadbeat generals  
and contractors  
your drug pushing  
circumcising doctors

The clamor of  
non-being I  
hear in the  
crowd's laughter

The roar of  
summer flies  
burning inside  
the webbed pane

The deluded  
talk and whisper,  
they worry and  
count their pennies

The false teaching  
of the corrupt  
and bogus teacher  
the corrupted university

Delusional blather  
of the commentators  
the public masturbation  
of demagogues

The confused frightened  
and ignorant populace  
worrying and talking  
trying to distract themselves

The light of clear  
reason and I  
place the word  
almost by itself

The clear voice  
of reason unheard  
most often and yet  
still somehow heard

Sometimes remembered  
amid the noise  
of the news articles  
and celebrity gossip



The spirit is  
a sheath  
of feeling images  
webs of memory

the child's  
cut into at birth  
and it must  
scream so loud

here now I  
do not but yet  
set down this  
syllabic indictment

Delusional Americans  
you run to vote  
or at least walk  
but to where?

Delusional Americans  
you imagine  
the ultimate  
board game

And yet it is  
a game you  
understand only  
your mindless games

## CIRCUMCISION

Historical memory  
cut through this,  
sutured into  
the body

Mythological  
anatomy excised  
with stainless intent,  
the suspect removed

I am suspect still  
not a Jew yet  
must be one anyway  
though despite that

Memory crowded  
inside my  
hand my eye  
cannot reach it

I do not want  
my own mind,  
I spit it here  
like blood

Blood stain of writing  
never to be  
wiped out of  
these bandages

Excision of future  
feelings preemption  
of knowing blindness  
in advance of sight

Circumscribing  
of insight by a  
priest's or a doctor's  
hand

The unknown  
is a sheath for me  
now the  
unknowable

Pain in that flesh  
where the medical  
quack's incision  
cut through

That part still  
remembers and  
you who read me  
are put off

Impermissible speech  
I must suffer  
in silence I  
must bleed and smile

This brown ring  
where the water  
was drawn away and  
unlike water cut

At times the empty  
receptacle cannot  
be filled again  
all entirely gone

Find the seven  
seas anyway  
search for them through  
dark passages

This scar  
is a writing  
of invisible  
enigmatic letters

I must search  
for them in  
sponge-like muscle  
and blood vessels

In skin as fine  
as a cob web  
I must search for  
the hidden book

A Jew by a  
special election  
I walk through  
polished corridors

I walk through  
streets buildings  
nominated structures  
so many dark cubes

A secret mark is  
on me meaningful  
yet speechless enigma  
only you can see

Your tongue  
searches for  
the words that are  
hidden there

Or so they must  
be so I  
have been told  
hygienic letters

Pure and clean  
the signs waiting  
for you, you suck for so long --  
it is useless

Invisible words  
gleam like streaks  
in the shiny wax  
of corridors

Invisible words  
are visible in  
street traffic lights  
or window signs

Invisible words  
are trailed littered  
in this scar that  
looks like sediment

[Issenheim Altarpiece]

Christ considers  
his mother with  
a certain coolness,  
we must likewise

Tunnel of space/time  
draws me body  
and mind you  
must suck hard

You must suck hard  
to draw me back,  
but no I flow up  
like a flame away

Women of  
the mid-western  
plains you must  
explain to me

Statistical regression  
draws you  
back to a mean,  
you are bound

Space and time  
themselves  
must wait upon your  
cries but do not

Denuded acorn  
integument  
ripped down to  
expose the tree

The tree of Jesse  
spewed past  
pearly gates reaching  
darkened shores

This votive candle  
drips its wax  
pours its droplets  
down your throat

I am sutured  
to the realm of  
symbolic meaning  
here exactly

Arrogant American  
woman why  
do you  
prefer this?

What is the  
nature of  
my body my self,  
how to know it?

You why  
did you need  
to alter so  
this body?

You chose  
to do this --  
was it really for  
your given reasons?

Yet I can still  
feel the scalpel's  
cutting, and so I  
do not believe you



Knife cut relived  
every day of  
one's life from now  
until one dies

Continuous ache  
as though from  
a recent incision,  
continuous echo

What other things  
does one not know,  
what other things  
has one been told?

A scalpel a cutting  
instrument awaits  
the child at birth  
for hygiene

Mothers line up  
for this latest thing  
with approval  
of the physician

Nurses women  
prepare the child  
strapping him down  
with legs spread wide

A wound is shown  
on the very surface  
the suturing there  
webbed yet precise

This done to exhibit,  
the glans must be  
denuded entirely,  
meet for the eye

Every man must be  
a kind of Philoctetes  
his wound must go with him  
as he walks his island

The White male  
bleeds as the  
female does bandaged  
between legs

The Black male  
also bleeds the  
antipersonnel mine  
fragmentation grenade

A razor is drawn  
across the eye  
the lid is cut off  
the film snapped

Indiscretion with  
regard to the  
unsayable I have  
attempted it

You kiwanas  
you high fiber  
you pizza hut  
you red lobster

The boy is  
strapped down spread  
eagle when born  
a razor is set there

The body is  
a sheath  
not for the soul  
but for the felt

What I  
cannot feel  
I cannot know  
nor understand

What is not  
felt is dead,  
to me unknown  
I am dead to it

These words  
come forth from me  
quite spontaneously  
unpremeditated

These words  
are not allowed  
in official venues  
nor these thoughts

And too I am glad  
that others  
have what I  
was not allowed

How do you  
feel when I  
am present there,  
am I ever really?

Without mediation  
two objects can  
but two lives  
cannot touch

The attempt becomes  
exacerbation,  
there is this  
profound dissonance

I think of  
intercourse at  
times I realize  
it is impossible

The power  
is not merely  
to perform,  
it is to feel

It is not  
performance  
that I lack,  
I cannot feel

It is not  
surprising  
surgery involves  
anesthesia

It always  
must but  
should that be  
its purpose?

Absence of feeling  
imposed  
by the physician  
by the priest the quack

You like  
the way this looks  
better  
evidently

It is strange  
you are so  
precise about  
such things

But with such  
broad experience  
there comes  
discernment

Impermissible  
sensation  
and not merely  
thought or speech

That those two  
should be  
forbidden, this I  
have long known

But what  
does it mean  
to forbid  
sensation in itself?

Rights of  
the child and  
so we  
practice cutting

It is more  
convenient to  
cut newborn  
children boys

Lacking this  
we might lose  
sight of our  
most basic values

Love is by means  
of a vehicle  
it must  
have a means

In itself it  
is a movement  
but not from  
idea to idea

It is not  
disembodied  
it is a physical  
spirit in part

Semitic religion  
requiring the  
excision of knowledge  
blinded sight

As though from  
inspection of  
the sun itself  
blank and luminous

God of the Jews  
of the Christians  
of the Muslims  
now and forever

You Vincent now  
you are entirely  
dead and you will  
be dead forever

Yet you never quite  
existed as a person --  
narcissistic personality,  
a classic case

Now you are  
the refuse -- yet only  
a small piece still -- of  
this blighted society



You always you  
never you always  
you never you  
always you never

Mother said  
mother said  
mother said  
quite often

You Rose  
now pure senility  
blossoms in your  
curdled face

Did you have fun  
your wire  
coat hanger  
across my leg

Your glass hairbrush  
on my thigh  
You climbed in bed  
with me one night

Your slight chuckle  
amused  
at my puzzlement  
and vague alarm

The circumcised boy  
is strapped  
spread eagle  
in a plastic frame

The doctor  
cuts away  
one third of  
the penis's skin

Done for  
hygienic reasons  
important to maintain  
the public health

I must ex-  
perience the  
many in order  
to know the one

My lack my  
scar requires  
this repetition  
of knowledge

Only that can  
answer but yet  
never restore,  
endless and useless

The prostitute  
is for us  
the one woman  
we must know

She is the body  
we must draw  
around ourselves  
filled with knowledge

As a mouth is full  
of infinite words  
or a memory  
of the world

Networks of feeling  
that draw  
us to a  
deeper feeling

And that  
awaken  
questions, and yet  
what is feeling?

What is feeling  
in itself if I  
am filled with it  
here and now?

A kind of tube  
that blood traffic  
fills  
on its journey

Networks of light  
that are  
nonetheless  
quite dark

Networks of feeling  
that draw and  
pull into  
the deepest question

The woman makes  
it known that  
she prefers the other  
a full branch

Not a stripped one  
a looser skin not  
one stretched so tight  
a living thing

Not a skinned rabbit  
a lid to an eye  
not a bare stripped  
drying cornea

You Rose Esther  
circumcising mother  
a kind of early  
feminist of sorts

Not really Jewish  
prejudiced against  
them actually  
and yet

The Jewish physician  
an enthusiast also  
and thus both devised this  
congruent protocol

I have been told  
that its name is great  
and yet I believe  
that I am greater

Albeit drawn down  
like a flame into  
its melted wax  
a curdled nipple

Unraveled  
black lace  
of the wick's smudge  
the fire oyster

Fascistic woman  
you prefer things  
so sleek  
and streamlined

Your breasts are  
the nose cones  
of missiles  
your gym work out

So that's why  
you like this kind  
better or at least  
so you say

The spirit is  
a sheath  
of feeling images  
webs of memory

The child is  
cut into at birth  
and it must  
scream so loud

Here now I  
do no longer but  
set down this  
syllabic indictment

Pain in the  
body but is  
the body  
capable of other?

Women do not  
undergo this  
natal incision  
invention of the Jews

And at length by  
means of this entrance  
into myself I enter  
other dispensations

The circumcised boy  
screams the delivery room  
his bowels evacuate  
he's strapped spread eagle

The homeless man  
lies under cardboard  
beside the steal dumpster  
locked shut against misuse

The cop car's probe  
splits the vaginal  
alleyway right through  
searching its tense walls

## MOTEL POEMS

Knot hole slammed  
open the gladiola  
swallows gulps  
the wooden handle

Taut arctic sheet is  
dimpled by four  
knees a buttocks  
plucks abdomen hairs

Darkened room air  
is sucked in  
with faint nausea  
by two mouths

A man who loves  
splits open  
a shell by means  
of a snail

A mouth that  
cannot be closed  
is fed countless  
living things

The turkey is  
stuffed to its  
ribs with  
the untold millions



She lives on  
all fours chewing  
through the  
darkened room

Invisible collar and  
the leash of long  
brown hair and  
softest barking

Running now  
through the dream  
self valley chasing  
shadow rabbits

Always open mouth  
eats well and much  
and considers  
quieted then

A stainless finger  
is set down  
like a light beam  
through the pond's dark

The bottom is dredged  
and the throat  
tickled to vomiting  
like a senator

Come let him  
tell you this  
curved branch  
rising in

Here where you  
drink from  
the fountain's hair  
pulling the waves

You assent  
with a raised chin  
tipping the jug  
of froth

His cigarette end  
splits the knot hole  
of her smoke ring  
his adze splits

The wood grain  
of her face  
the silence ticks  
with pelvic lappings

The drum head  
of a white sheet  
beats out  
faster faster time

You there Maureen  
your pot belly  
swagging down  
like a cow's udder

And she is  
is behind you  
insistent breaking  
your peach pit

Sounds of gas  
passing as she  
humps up underneath  
your anus

A strap  
on is up  
your anus  
Maureen

Your girl  
friend is  
behind you  
yes and yes

Where is  
she from  
Maureen, Viet  
Nam, China?

Your female  
lover is  
Asian  
Maureen

And we  
meet you two  
by chance  
in the bar

You are  
so embarrassed  
you won't  
look our way

Your con-  
descension  
is like  
an odor

And I  
remember  
your bad  
breath once

When you gave  
me a ride  
in your car  
my memory

O Deborah your  
breathy elegant voice  
pure waspish  
elegance

And you speak  
in the room  
of the hard  
realities

Yes you  
know them  
so well yes  
you do yes

The tip of  
your tongue  
lodged in a  
glycerine drip

You inquire  
of that small  
single eye  
working your way in

Then your teeth  
so white  
placed on the scar  
that is there

The handle is  
pushed all the way  
into the hand  
that slides over it

Your throat  
has its own  
gripping power  
amazing really

Foxy, your teeth  
chew through wires  
You suck up eggs  
by a rooster's necks

Although you have  
fucked everyone  
yet still this slit is  
so slight and small

like the opening of  
a milkweed pod  
white feathers of angels  
packed inside

an eyelid that can  
never open really  
and yet must  
still try, try

The people  
are not  
a vehicle of  
culture

They are  
its recipients  
they are  
not wisdom

They must  
study it  
or be brought  
near it

## FOR SIMONE WEIL

Simone advises  
there is always a choice,  
and those in the past  
chose as they did

Consequences ramify  
shattering through the world,  
the maps of history  
are smashed windshields

Accordion pleats  
of time drawing out  
and then squeezing in  
toward crisis

You at the table  
there in the café,  
your hands  
in your lap, Simone

What one thinks  
another may think,  
but what were you  
thinking, being?

What is existence  
that we have it  
and then do not?  
where are you, Simone?



Soon now in  
the Nothing I  
and with all  
of the others

Old photographs  
are so haunting --  
haunted noon light  
on tables and chairs

The dapple of trees  
on bare arms  
on necks bent over books  
Where are they?

They speak of your  
awkwardness --  
graceless, unattractive,  
so they say

And yet I say  
that you were beautiful,  
at least in  
one photograph

And therefore were --  
the light -- there, then,  
at that moment, knowing  
what they did not

Did you look down  
at your hand  
while writing?  
every hand's the same

My hand like yours  
crawling through light,  
scratching at the wall  
of a written page

Touching the face  
in the old picture  
of someone long gone  
who will not return

Youth is exhausting,  
I sometimes think  
we should pity  
those who have it

You burned up  
not with youth  
alone, though,  
as most do

Getting merely older  
through cindered days --  
you burned in the fire  
that must never stop

Thought is a fire  
that burns through  
everything, the world  
is mere paper in it

How so then  
a young woman,  
how should she  
survive?

If she stand  
in the middle,  
in the very middle,  
she is most unwise

They speak of your  
awkwardness --  
clumsy, I have  
heard it said

And so they,  
what about them?  
Nureyev every one  
of them, no doubt

Your courage, your  
energy for others --  
to work in a factory,  
to fight in Spain

## TO THE READER

You who read  
me, who are  
you and what?  
your eyes far

So far down  
in lamplit water,  
your face obscured  
in the bright screen

I am searching now  
for the thought  
I cannot think  
by myself alone

My writing is  
this searching --  
here, now -- for thoughts  
to be found

That I cannot find  
and cannot have  
by myself alone,  
you must help me

You who read me,  
help me to find  
to know here what  
I might not know

What is the grip  
that one mind  
has can have  
on another one?

You who read me,  
what do you think --  
tell me, hear me  
and let me hear

What are the steps  
now taken in  
the same path by  
how many walkers?

Known and unknown  
came opening  
these moments here,  
waiting silence

Known and unknown  
thinking is felt  
heard waited for  
and not attempted

Luminous vigilance  
now tense and quick  
the confused order  
the silent clamorous

The sounds outside  
the window as  
I think these words,  
these thoughts

Felt as thought,  
time burgeons  
separates multiplies  
in these syllables

Where is the  
sentence taking  
me in its reasoned  
improvisation?

## AFTERWORD

### Encounters With the Author in Taipei

We first made the author's acquaintance at a well-known restaurant in Taipei, the Wysteria Tea House, famous as having been a meeting place at one time for dissident intellectuals in the years of political struggle in Taiwan . During the recent effort to publish his rather extensive work, we had various occasions to discuss aspects of his past and current writing.

Your poetry is quite varied in style and in form. Where do you locate yourself in the overall debate concerning poetic form?

I consider myself an eclectic. The main thing for me is to grasp, mentally, a certain object -- that is, an experience, a scene, an event -- to see it and feel it. Any language that seems to convey the reality of that is good, any language which remains merely language, merely words, is for me of no interest, in some cases it is actively negative, in the sense of being obstructive.

A cliché?

Yes or not even a cliché but in a way worse than that. Much of our language obscures the nature of reality. Words in themselves are, in a sense, the enemy of writing. I tell students that all the time. Words most often merely convey the usual accepted social understanding. Writing is for the purpose of grasping reality itself, which is always something other than the social understanding.

Do you consider yourself a political writer?

All writing is political in the sense of attempting to correct these false social understandings. At times its purpose is to merely reveal with a new freshness, a perceptual freshness, as it were. But even this itself has a certain basic political significance, in the sense that awakened human beings will act and think differently than those who are at rest in the normal tranquilized non-perception that we usually are caught up in.

Does living outside the United States help or hinder your writing?

I think it helps, in general. It is in some ways a very undeveloped culture, yet in other ways it is overbearing. (The US, that is.) There is, for example, a great deal of rather stifling political correctness, as it's called, and to get away from that is itself a positive thing. For a while I had no idea how I would ever get all this material published, especially if you're not there trying to do all the "networking" that is needed, and which I was absolutely terrible at anyway -- worse than terrible, I really had no clue, I still don't, I suppose. And then it came about that you could just do it all by yourself, by means of the internet.

How much material is it? It's quite a lot, it would seem.

Yes, I guess it's about 40 volumes or so. Over 2,000 pages, if you want to measure it like that. I don't know how much it would weigh.

There seem to be many styles represented. Was that something you consciously strove for?



Yes. I always wanted to be able to represent a wide variety of experiences. My first models for the artist were people such as Picasso, Goethe, Bach -- artists who could work in a very wide range of forms and even use widely different styles. Of course, I can't compare myself to people like that, but it was still a goal, to try many types of things.

What sorts of things are you working on currently?

Well as you know I am trying to get all this existing work published, going through it, touching it up here and there, proofreading, and so forth. After that, I think I might return to some translating work -- Holderlin especially, and some Chinese poets, but don't ask me which ones.

All right, but can you say whether they are modern or classical?

Classical. My favorite is Mung Hao-Ren, actually.

What was the objective with these pieces?

I suppose I wanted to use a very minimal verse form closely allied to simple song combined with at times extravagant metaphor or very sharply focused images. I was thinking of Creeley a bit but more of Jimenez, Quasimodo, maybe Prevert at times -- I was pulled by opposite impulses.

## **About the Author**

Steven Frattali is an expatriate American writer living in Taipei. He is the author to date of over 40 volumes of poetry, totaling over 2,000 pages of work. He is also the author of several critical works, among them *Person, Place and World: A Late Modern Reading of Robert Frost* and *Hypodermic Light: The Poetry of Philip Lamantia and the Question of Surrealism*.

## **About the Banyan Press of Taipei**

The Banyan Press of Taipei was founded in 2009 by Samuel Palmer and Steven Frattali. It plans to publish the work of expatriate Anglophone writers of the Pacific Rim who are working outside the norms of mainstream publishing. The Press does not at this time invite submissions, but it hopes to do so in the future.

